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ABSTRACT

The relationship between spirituality, and counseling and psychotherapy has been given increased attention in recent years. The author suggests that the teachings of Alfred Adler may assist counselor educators in integrating faith and learning in an unimposing manner respectful of religious tenets, focusing on spirituality, which can include specific religious doctrines, such as those imbedded in Christianity. The focus of this paper is on how counselor educators can use the Adlerian principles of encouragement and the crucial C's in the integration of Christian spirituality and learning in counselor education. (Contains 29 references.) (GCP)

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Running Head: Integration of Spirituality and Learning

The Integration of Christian Spirituality and Learning in Counselor Education: A Lesson from Adler

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The relationship between spirituality, and counseling and psychotherapy has been given increased attention in recent years. The professional literature contains numerous articles that address the inclusion of spirituality and religious issues in the provision of counseling and psychotherapy services (Carter, 1999; Ellis, 2000; Eriksen, Marston, & Korte, 2002; Garrett, 1994; Herrera, 2000; Lovinger, 1990; Mansager, 2000; Mansager et al., 2002; Polanski, 2002; Richards & Bergin, 1997; Watts, 2000). The literature is also beginning to incorporate spirituality and religious issues in the training of counselors and psychotherapists (Burke et al., 1999; Kelly, 1997; Matthews, 1998; Miller, 1999; Pate & High, 1995; Souza, 1999; Young, Cashwell, Wiggins-Frame, & Belaire, 2002). How this training is done and by what means religion, faith, and spirituality are incorporated into counselor education is not clearly identified.

The Christian college literature speaks to the integration of faith and learning in higher education (Hasker, 1992; Heie, 1997; Nwosu, 1998; Walsh, 1992). Hasker (1992) reports that integrating faith and learning is not a matter of faculty members cultivating a certain religious or spiritual lifestyle, not merely using examples from professional disciplines to illustrate religious and spiritual truths, nor simply publicizing that a college integrates faith and learning. Rather, the integration of faith and learning is a scholarly attempt to develop integral relationships, which exist between faith and human knowledge, particularly as expressed in various disciplines. The teachings of Alfred Adler may assist counselor educators in incorporating Hasker's approach to integrating faith and learning in an unimposing manner respectful of religious tenets, focusing on spirituality, which can include specific religious doctrines such as those embedded in Christianity. The focus of this paper will be on how counselor educators can use the

Adlerian principles of encouragement and the crucial C's in the integration of Christian spirituality and learning in counselor education.

Religion, Spirituality and Counselor Education

At the core of who I am as a Christian and as a professional counselor is a belief in the growth and development of each one of us in the image of Christ. Counselor educators are charged with the task of training professional counselors to be sensitive and accepting of the uniqueness present in the counseling relationship with divers clientele. Clients come to counseling with divers religious and spiritual characteristics and needs. It is imperative that professional counselors are competently trained to assist clients, taking into consideration religious and spiritual issues but what is the distinction between religion and spirituality?

Burke et al. (1999) identify the distinction between and overlap of spirituality and religion, which also serves as the foundation for my focus on spirituality, stating that "spirituality is an experiential appreciation of the meaning of life" constituting a "deep sense of belonging, of wholeness, of connectedness, and of openness to the infinite" (p. 252). Furthermore, these authors state that religion represents an institutionalized set of beliefs and practices to relate to the ultimate. Christ is the ultimate to me as a Christian and as a counselor yet the search for belonging, wholeness, connectedness, and the meaning of life is often at the core of why clients come to counseling and behind many students attraction to counselor education.

Spirituality can also be viewed as a subjective, personal experience of the transcendental nature of something greater, such as the universe and a creator, where as religion can be viewed more as the institutional and religious expression of spirituality

(Kelly, 1995). Counselors are often faced with phenomenological issues presented by clients in counseling, which may or may not be associated directly with specific religious doctrines or have a foundation in any specific institutionalized religious belief. Regardless of a counselor's beliefs, one must be cognizant of the need to explore spiritual and religious issues as part of the counseling process. Consequently, counselor educators have a duty to incorporate religious and spiritual issues into the training of professional counselors that promote the establishment of spiritual competencies in the practice of counseling.

Counselor educators have been slow to embrace the inclusion of spiritual and religious matters in counselor preparation programs. The literature reports that many counselor educators seem to recognize the importance of spirituality and religion in counselor training (Burke et al., 1999; Souza, 1999). Unfortunately, there seems to be a discrepancy between counselor educators' views of spirituality and religion being important and the inclusion of these topics in counselor training standards and counselor education in general (Burke et al., 1999; Kelly, 1997; Matthews, 1998; Pate & High, 1995; Souza, 1999; Young et al., 2002). Training standards for professional counselors include focusing on the issues of diversity and, spirituality and religion contribute to the many unique qualities that constitute the diverse clientele that present for counseling.

The Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) is the national accrediting body for professional counselor preparation in the United States. The CACREP standards are used in some form or another by most states for credentialing purposes of professional counselors (Harris, 1997). CACREP standards require training in social and cultural diversity, specifically

speaking to religious and spiritual values, in addition various other factors for which counselors must be sensitive to, including but no limited to culture, race, gender and ethnicity (CACREP, 2001). Inclusion of spirituality and religion in the CACREP standards can be enhanced through infusing these topics in the other core curriculum content areas including human growth and development, helping relationships, group work, career and lifestyle development, appraisal, research and program evaluation, and professional orientation (Burke et al., 1999; Kelly, 1995). Counselor educators have a responsibility to assist counselors-in-training in establishing competencies that will allow for the practice of professional counseling. These competencies must include spirituality. Christian colleges promote spirituality from a Christian perspective. It is from this perspective that Christian counselor education programs prepare counselors-in-training.

Christian Spirituality

Counselor educators train professional counselors to work with diverse clientele and to be sensitive and accepting to the uniqueness of each client in the counseling relationship. It is imperative that professional counselors are competently trained to assist clients, taking into consideration religious and spiritual issues. Christian counselor education programs may be well equipped to assist counselors-in-training with this endeavor since the mission of most Christian colleges and universities includes exposure to religious and/or spiritual tenants. While there is a vast diversity in what is deemed to be "Christian," Christian spirituality can be promulgated into a relatively concise understanding. Christians view spirituality as a more specific and personal state of being. Collins (1998) state that a Christian view of spirituality

> involves personal intimacy with God, a process of being conformed to the image of God for the sake of others. The spiritual journey is an ongoing experience of being shaped by God toward wholeness....Christian spirituality is compassion oriented. It reaches out to the poor, the hungry, the needy, the sick, the victims of violence and their perpetrators, the down-and-outers in poverty-entrenched neighborhoods, and the-up-and outer subordinates who are often too proud or self-sufficient to admit their neediness. Christ modeled concern for the needy, care for those in distress, and willingness to come alongside people in their times of pain and confusion. He was deeply concerned as well for people who didn't know him, and he instructed his followers, as a last word of admonition, to go into the world and make disciples. (pp. 91, 190)

Croucher (cited in Watts, 2000) reported a clear and concise definition of Christian spirituality which will serve as the foundational definition for this manuscript and a guide for counselor educators:

> Christian spirituality is about the movements of God's Spirit in one's life, in the community of faith, and in the cosmos....It is concerned with how all realities relate, enlivened, enlightened, empowered by the Spirit of Jesus. [Spirituality is] the dynamic process whereby the Word of God (Bible) is applied by the Spirit of God to the heart and mind of the child of God so that she or he becomes more like the Son of God (Jesus). (p. 91)

Christian counselor educators can prepare counselors-in-training, taking into consideration Christian spirituality, without imposing institutionalized Christian religious beliefs and perspectives. Professional counseling consists of exposing clients to new

ideas and behaviors that may influence their growth and development, as opposed to imposing beliefs and values onto clients, and counselor educators are responsible for preparing counselors to meet this challenge. The theory of Alfred Adler, Individual Psychology, may have some components that can assist counselor educators with integrating Christian spirituality into training professional counselors.

Adlerian Theory and Christian Spirituality

Alfred Adler formulated his theory of Individual Psychology early in the twentieth century. Often referred to as Adlerian psychology, Adler believed in the positive nature of the human condition. Furthermore, Adlerians believe that encouragement serves as a crucial component to human success and happiness. Sweeney (1998) states that "encouragement inspires or helps others towards a conviction that they can work on finding solutions and that they can cope with any predicament" (p.140).

Encouragement is more than a reward. It is a state of being that 1) focuses on what one is doing rather than how one is doing, 2) is focused on the present rather then the past, 3) recognizes the deed is more important than the doer, 4) promotes an emphasis on effort rather than the outcome, 5) identifies intrinsic motivation, 6) focuses on what is being learned more than what is not, and 7) stresses what is being done correctly rather than one's mistakes (Sweeney, 1998). Adlerian psychology is strengths based as evidenced by this description of encouragement.

Another Adlerian principle is the crucial C's. Lew and Bettner (1996) describe the crucial C's that children need to grow into health, happy and productive adults. The crucial C's are the ability to *Connect* in a constructive way, the ability to believe one is *Capable*, that one *Counts* in a constructive way, and that one has the *Courage* to be

imperfect. The crucial C's are core in the formulation of healthy and interactive relationships. These Adlerian concepts, encouragement and the crucial C's, can assist counselor educators with integrating Christian spirituality into training professional counselors.

Counselor Education and Christian Spirituality

Counselor educators have been slow to include spiritual and religious matters in counselor preparation programs. As stated earlier, counselor educators recognize the importance of spirituality and religion in counselor training (Burke et al., 1999; Souza, 1999) but little has been done to include these topics in counselor training standards and counselor education in general (Burke et al., 1999; Kelly, 1997; Matthews, 1998; Pate & High, 1995; Souza, 1999; Young et al., 2002). Counselor educators can use encouragement to create and facilitate relationships with counselors-in-training that are strengths based. Furthermore, encouragement can aid in exposing counseling students the Christian spirituality in their training. Sweeney's (1998) description of encouragement is very Christ like. Counselor educators can encourage counselors-in-training through exposing them to God's, or a creator's, presence in their lives and the world around them. Encouragement allows for an emphasis of Christian spirituality focusing on the effort to understand how the Spirit of Jesus can be empowering and the Word of God intrinsically motivating.

Counselor educators can also use the crucial C's (Lew & Bettner, 1996) to assist in exposing students to Christian spirituality. They can begin by establishing egalitarian relationships with students, making a positive connection with them from the outset.

Counselor educators need to be genuine and honest with students and let them know they care about them as a Christian.

As relationships with counselors-in-training begin to grow, counselor educators need to help students to learn knowledge, skills, and an identity as a professional counselor. Furthermore, students also need to be exposed to how a Christian can serve as a professional counselor, which will enable them to feel competent that they have the ability to incorporate their spirituality in their practice as a professional counselor. Curtis & Glass (2002) report that faculty can address spirituality in counselor education courses by expanding students' awareness of spirituality, increasing students' awareness of their own spiritual development, and increasing students' confidence in addressing spiritual issues with clients by teaching specific techniques. Counselor educators can employ these three principles throughout their counseling courses to integrate Christian spirituality into the curriculum. Addressing these principles can also help counselor educators enable students to feel competent about their own spirituality as well as feeling capable to address the spirituality of others as a professional counselor.

Christian counselor educators should strive to be viewed by students as Christian professional counselors who are respectful of others' spirituality. In addition, counselor educators need to demonstrate to students that they are valuable to them, the counseling program, the counseling profession, and ultimately to God or a creator. If students understand that they count, especially in the eyes of God or a higher being, they are more likely to believe that they can make a difference in a constructive way as a professional counselor.

Last, counselor educators should instill courage in their students to be imperfect. As Christians, we believe that none of us are without sin. To face our sins, we must be solid in our spirituality and have the courage to see ourselves imperfect in the eyes of Christ. It is through the commitment to the ultimate "C" – Christ, that we will be able to attain salvation. This courage also speaks to being imperfect as a counselor. Professional counselors must be empathic, willing to listen, and remain open to their clients, as Christ is to each of us. Eriksen, Marston, and Korte (2002) report that meditation is often considered a spiritual practice and suggest that it can be used as a way to incorporate spirituality into counselor education courses. Counselor educators can begin courses with a meditation time to help students relax, facilitate a deeper sharing, provide devotions and prayer. It can be structured or unstructured, soliciting students for input for the meditation. Devotions and/or prayers may also be included in the meditation as moved by Christ. The ultimate goal of counselor educators is to train competent professional counselors. Integrating Christian spirituality into counselor education may be aided through the using Adlerian principles of encouragement and the crucial C's. Programmatically, the integrating of Christian spirituality into counselor education may also be aided by assuring that the spirituality competencies promoted by the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC) (1996).

Spirituality Competencies

ASERVIC (1996) outlines nine competencies that address spirituality and religious components in professional counseling (see Appendix). These spirituality competencies can aid counselor educators in promoting Christian spirituality while emphasizing respect and acceptance in the counseling relationship. The competencies

also relate well to Adlerian encouragement and the crucial C's. The content of the competencies seem to incorporate well into CACREP curriculum standards (Burke et al., 1999) or they can serve as a core component to a specific course addressing spirituality (Curtis & Glass, 2002). The competencies can serve as guidelines for counselor education programs to assess whether they are effectively training spiritually competent professional counselors.

Conclusion

Spirituality in counselor education has been given little attention in recent years. The literature is beginning to incorporate spirituality and religious issues in the training of counselors and psychotherapists (Burke et al., 1999; Kelly, 1997; Matthews, 1998; Miller, 1999; Pate & High, 1995; Souza, 1999; Young, Cashwell, Wiggins-Frame, & Belaire, 2002). The Christian college literature addresses the integration of faith and learning in higher education (Hasker, 1992; Heie, 1997; Nwosu, 1998; Walsh, 1992). Counselor educators can use the Adlerian principles of encouragement and the crucial C's in the integration of Christian spirituality and learning in counselor education. These principles provide an avenue for counselor educators, both Christian and non-Christian, to expose students the Christian spirituality as a way to aid student development of counseling competencies. Developing spiritual competencies can also be enhanced through the use of the nine components of the spiritual competencies (ASERVIC, 1996) developed by ASERVIC. These spiritual competencies not only serve as a guide for counselor educators but may also function as a method of assessing student development of competencies dealing with spiritual and religious issues in professional counseling.

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Appendix

Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC)

Spirituality Competencies (ASERVIC, 1996)

The Professional Counselor can:

- Expiain the relationship between religion and spirituality, including both the similarities and differences.
- Describe religious and/or spiritual beliefs and practices in a cultural context.
- Engage in self-exploration of one's own religious and/or spiritual beliefs in order to increase sensitivity, understanding, and acceptance on one's belief system.
- Describe one's religious and/or spiritual belief system. Explain various models of religious and/or spiritual development across the lifespan.
- Demonstrate sensitivity and acceptance of a variety of religious and/or spiritual expressions in the client's communication.
- Identify the limits of one's understanding of a client's religious and/or spiritual expression and if appropriate, demonstrate appropriate referral skills (and be able to generate a list of possible referral sources).
- Assess the relevance of the religious and/or spiritual domains in the client's therapeutic issues.
- Be both sensitive to and receptive of the religious and/or spiritual themes in the counseling process as they fit the client's expressed preferences.
- Use the client's religious and/or spiritual beliefs in the pursuit of the client's therapeutic goals as they fit the client's expressed preferences.

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